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## **U.S. Customs Commissioner Visits OKC**

*Washington, DC --* U.S. Customs Commissioner Robert Bonner traveled to Oklahoma City this week at the invitation of Congressman Ernest J. Istook (R-OK) demonstrating Oklahoma's expanding role in homeland security and in the import/export community. Bonner toured the Customs National Aviation Center (CNAC) in Oklahoma City adjacent to Will Rogers Airport and met with over 50 local government officials and business leaders involved in the import/export business during his visit.

**"The U.S. Customs Service has two jobs: helping keep America safe and supporting trade to keep America prosperous,"** said Istook, chairman of the appropriations subcommittee which oversees the funding of the U.S. Customs Service. **"They are safeguarding our lives and our livelihood. Oklahoma, with its facilities and unique geographical location, has a vital role to play in both. That's why I'm making sure the government takes full advantage of what we have to offer."**

CNAC, the only facility of its type in America, currently performs all aviation training for the U.S. Customs Service. Istook included a \$10-million increase for CNAC to expand its tactical training for all customs pilots in this year's appropriation bill. That's on top of another \$7-million increase Istook secured last year.

**"Chairman Istook has been very instrumental in getting U.S. Customs the resources, and the staffing, and the equipment it needs to do a better job to protect the American people,"** Bonner said during his tour of CNAC this afternoon.

Oklahoma's role in export/import community is also expanding. The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce has been working to establish Will Rogers as a service port of entry for international air cargo, and recently an Ecuador grower group has committed to use Oklahoma City as a central U.S. distribution location for fresh, wholesale South American flowers.

**"Oklahoma City offers tremendous advantages for the import and export of goods due to its central geographic location,"** according to Richard A. Burpee, President of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce. **"We have a first-class airport with excellent potential for expansion. In addition, we have an existing foreign trade zone as well as numerous trucking companies available to quickly distribute goods."**

Congressman Istook said, **"Oklahoma has a lot to offer both in America's fight against terrorism and to the export/import community. I'm pleased that I've been able to help both Oklahoma and our country by making sure all resources are used most wisely and efficiently."**